

AN EMOTIONAL RECOVERY TOOL THAT CHANGES EVERYTHING

Hi. This is Natalie Hoffman of Flyingfreenow.com, and you're listening to the Flying Free Podcast, a support resource for women of faith looking for hope and healing from hidden emotional and spiritual abuse.

NATALIE: Welcome to Episode 160 of the Flying Free Podcast! Today I want to teach you a tool that I use in all of my coaching inside my programs, and I don't think that I've ever dedicated an entire episode to teaching this tool. Now I might have, but if I have, I've forgotten, and if I've forgotten, then I'm guessing it's okay to do it again. I've purposely picked Episode 160 to teach this, because it will be easier for my brain to remember Episode 160 and I can refer women to this lesson in the future to help them understand how we can change our brains and why it is important to change our brains. So, why is it important to change our brains? Because when we change our brains, we change our lives.

Now, if you're listening and you just love your life, and all is well, and you never have big emotions like anxiety or fear or anger or grief or confusion, or if it comes easy for you to hold space for everyone else to just be who they are, and you're totally comfortable in your skin and you never get riled up about much, then this episode is not for you. Just flip to another podcast right now, because this is going to be a total waste of your time. But if you're anything like me, and you sometimes feel like your life is out of control and your emotions are all over the place and you feel like you're drowning in all the things, then keep listening, because I'm going to teach you the tool I use to manage my own brain and my own life.

I first learned this tool two years ago, and I use it every single day to get traction over my thinking, my emotions, my behavior, and the results my behavior gets me. So first of all, before we get into the tool, I want to talk about our brains. There are three parts to our brain. First of all, there's the non-conscious brain. Now, this is what our past gave us. It gave us all of this input that got recorded into our non-conscious brain. The non-conscious brain just records things. It doesn't judge anything, it doesn't analyze what it's taking in, it doesn't make decisions about "Should I keep this, should I not keep this?" It just objectively records everything, kind of like a computer. Kind of like when you keyboard in some things onto a Word document, alright? It just records it.

The other part of your non-conscious brain is called your non-conscious driver brain. That part of your brain takes all of the input and it turns it into this operating system. Basically, it creates a manual for how life should be according to your brain and

according to the input that's been put in there. Do you ever feel like you're hearing a small voice inside of yourself telling you what to do? Now, you might have thought that that was your conscience. Or, you may have even thought it was God talking to you. But most of the time, it was your brain's programming. Think about it. There are a lot of people out there who do a lot of bad things because, "God told them to." It wasn't really God. It was just the way they've been programmed. One example that comes to mind is the Twin Towers. The people that flew their airplanes into the Twin Towers in the United States, they believed that God was telling them to do that. But it was really just the way they had been programmed.

Alright, so your non-conscious driver brain wants to force you to play according to this programming that it has created based on all of the things that have been input into your brains since you were an infant. It tells you how to view yourself, how you believe others see you, what you should say to yourself, how you should feel about yourself, how you believe the world works, and what your role is in the world. Now, do you see how this can get pretty screwed up pretty fast considering what gets programmed into most human brains in this world from a very young age?

Now, your primal brain is not aware of anything outside of its programming, so it's just going to act and react based on that programming. Have you ever felt like you keep repeating the same mistakes over and over again like that movie "Groundhog Day"? Like no matter how hard you try to stop the cycle, it just forces its way into your life and you feel like it makes you say and do the same things you've always said and done? I used to do this when I was in my former marriage. We would be going into an argument together and I would be thinking, "Oh my word, I know how this is going to go. Just keep your mouth shut, Natalie. Just keep your mouth shut." And then I would find myself opening my mouth and entering into the same cycles that we had always been in and making the same arguments. Even while you're doing it, you're thinking, "I should not do this. It's never worked before. Why am I doing this? I don't know what else to do."

Here's another fascinating fact. Your brain is always, always going to look for evidence for what it believes is true even if it has to create that evidence for itself. There was a woman in one of my programs who truly believed that her son hated her. We asked her, "Why do you think your son hates you?" She said, "Well, I texted him one day, 'How are you doing?' and he texted me back, 'I'm fine.'" And we were like, "Why do you think he hates you because he texted you back?" I was thinking, "When my son texts me back, it's a miracle!" But in her mind, she was so convinced that her son hated her that even when he just texted back and said, "I'm fine," that was evidence to her brain that surely he must hate her. Do you see how our brains do that? Our brains are interesting, aren't

they?

So, our brains also don't know the difference between imagination and reality. That's why victims can sometimes hang on for a very long time to an impossible relationship. And this is also why abusive people can abuse without thinking that they're doing anything wrong. They've been programmed that way. Now, 95% of your thoughts come from your non-conscious brain, and that controls 95% of your behavior. Think about that. 95% of what we do is controlled by a part of our brain that is non-conscious. That is something to be thinking about, right?

Alright, now the third part of our brain is the conscious part of our brain. This is the part of our brain that actually notices what we're thinking. Isn't that fascinating? We can have thoughts, and then we can have thoughts about our thoughts. That's our conscious brain. This is the part of our brain that gets to discover our programming, those non-conscious thoughts under the hood, and then make a decision to interrupt that programming if we decide we don't want to keep it anymore. Your conscious brain is your prefrontal cortex. That's your adult brain. It's a part of you that is aware. The part of you that can evaluate problems and make rational decisions ahead of time and be creative. This is the part of your brain that you're going to deploy to interrupt the automatic thought loops that are creating unwanted results in your life.

Now, the adult "you" gets to do several important things. First of all, she gets to be a watcher of your programming. This part of you can be objective and just be aware of the thoughts that are coming across in your brain. And we can be aware of those thoughts with compassion. We don't have to judge these non-conscious thoughts that we're bringing to the surface. We can just observe them, notice them, and be curious about them. We can feel love for the part of our brain that is offering those thoughts because of our programming. This part of ourselves can't be dragged under because we are in control.

Now, another important thing that the adult conscious brain does is it feels with all of her senses. This part of our brain is wide awake. She gets to feel all of the pain but she also gets to feel all of the joy and the peace, and she isn't afraid of the feelings. She leans into all of them and is able to process through them. She understands that feelings are just vibrations in the body that are caused by our conscious thoughts and non-conscious programming, and they can't actually kill her. Now, our brain's old programming truly believes that the feelings are going to kill us. But the wise watcher knows that that's not true.

Another important thing the adult conscious brain does is that she gets to be in charge.

She gets to call the shots now. She's the adult. She's the decision maker. She's the boss of us, not our brain. We don't want our primal brain to be the boss of us. We want our conscious brain to be the boss of us. She no longer has to be controlled by this non-conscious programming. She gets to welcome it and look at this programming as it comes up and then make decisions if it gets to stay or if it needs to change.

Another important thing the adult conscious brain does is she gets to control herself and stop (this is such an important key) trying to control all of the other humans. Our primal brain depends on everyone else doing everything that it wants them to do so that we can feel love and not be so scared. But the adult "you" doesn't need to control outward circumstances. Your adult conscious brain knows that the only one you need to control in order to experience peace and joy inside of yourself is you. Now, this is super freeing because, while you can't control your kids or your partner or your family or your friends or your church or all the things, you can control your brain and what you're choosing to think. This is such good news because it means that other people can no longer control your life. They can do all kinds of things to you, but you get to decide what those things actually mean for you and your life.

The reason that we think our past, for example, is holding us back is not because the past is actually holding us back. It's because we have a thought that originated in our non-conscious mind that says, "You had a bad past, and it's totally ruined your future." Now, this thought has looped through our mind so many times that it's created a neural pathway, super highway in our brain, and now it is a deeply embedded belief system. The incredibly good news is that we can actually change the thought loop, or this programming, if we want to. And with enough practice with a new thought loop, we can create a totally different present and future for ourselves. We think that we are where we are today because of external forces and circumstances, because of other people or the things that have happened to us in our past. But the reality is that we are where we are today because of our brains and the thoughts that are programmed there.

Now, for many of us, this may be really good news. We've been used to thinking that we're just victims of our circumstances and there's little or nothing we can do to change our lot in life. But this simply isn't true. We're actually victims of our belief systems. We're victims of our own thinking. And the great news is that we have complete and total control over whether or not we decide to keep our thoughts and beliefs or exchange them for new ones. Your non-conscious brain programs you to believe certain things. Those beliefs are going to create thought sentences in your brain on autopilot. I call these thought loops. And those thoughts are going to bring up feelings in your body and make you feel a certain way or have certain emotions. And then those

feelings or emotions are going to fuel the things that you do, your behavior. And your behavior, your actions, are going to create the results. They're going to create your life. So the quality of your life is directly related to the quality of your thoughts. Is it any wonder that the Bible says to renew our minds and that when we renew our minds, that's the key to living the way God wants us to live?

Now here's the kicker: if you aren't aware of 95% of your thoughts, you're not going to be able to understand where all of your emotions are coming from. And if you don't know what those thoughts are, you're not going to be able to process through them. You can either choose to continue to allow your brain to run on auto-pilot or you can learn how to intervene and take responsibility with your adult brain. Responsibility is the ability to respond, and this is going to require your adult self to step in. But we can't step in unless we know or become aware of what our thoughts are.

So the tool I'm going to teach you in this episode gives us this information. It increases our awareness and reveals our programming so that we can interrupt it if we want to. This tool is called "The Model." It was developed by Brooke Castillo as a spin off of one of the tools used in cognitive behavioral therapy. I was certified in the use of this coaching tool and we use it in my programs to help women discover their brain's programming and what that programming is creating for them in their lives over and over and over again so that they can change it if they want to. And at the end of this episode, I'm going to read some of the things that members have said about how this particular tool has changed their lives. The tool is called "The Model" and there are five letters in the tool. The "C" stands for "Circumstance," the "T" stands for "Thoughts," the "F" stands for "Feeling," the A stands for "Actions," and the "R" stands for "Results."

So let's start out with the very first one, "C": circumstance. We're going to talk about the circumstances of our lives. What are circumstances? Circumstances are just things that happen to us that are outside of our control. They're facts. They're not opinions. Everyone in the world would agree, "Yes." "Yes, it is raining." "Yes, there is a snowstorm today." Yes, the tire on your car is flat." "Yes, this flight was canceled." "Yes, your child is sick." Okay? It's just boring math. There's no drama in circumstances. They're neutral and we can talk about them objectively. That's what a circumstance is. Now, circumstances can be things that happen to us like, our child gets sick, or we get on the scale and we weigh 167 pounds, or whatever. Those are things that happen to us or things that are facts in our lives. Or they can be things that other people do or say. So when someone says or does something in the world, that's also outside of our control. We don't control what others do or say or think. We don't control what our husband does or says or believes about us or about anything else in the world. He and all the things he does and says are a circumstance in our lives. What they say is a fact.

Everyone within listening distance would be able to say, "Yes. So and so said this:" and you could put it in quotes. What that person said and did is neutral, believe it or not, until someone makes it mean something.

And this is what we're going to talk about next: what we make different facts around us, our circumstances, what we make those things mean, are found in our thoughts. That's the "T" line. Thoughts are very different from circumstances. Thoughts are not objective, they are subjective. They are our opinions about things. They are what we're making something mean. There are almost 8 billion people on the planet and they can all have a different thought about the same circumstance depending on what part of the world they live in, their personality, their gender, their life experience, their culture, and so on. The things in the "T" line, in the "thought" line, can't be proven. You can't prove as a fact anyone's given thought or opinion. There's usually a lot of drama and story in our thoughts. And also, the other important thing to remember about thoughts is that they are all optional. We can't control our circumstances, but thoughts are something that we actually have control over. So here are some examples of some thoughts: "Cold weather is bad." "Lots of traffic is terrible." "I'm a failure." "My kids are rebellious." "My ex is a dirty liar." "My life is overwhelming." "I'll never lose weight." Now, we might think that some of those things are facts, but they're all thoughts. They're all opinions, okay?

Now here's the next line. The next line in the model is "F" and it stands for "Feeling," and it comes next because our thoughts are what create our emotions, our feelings, not our circumstances. This is so important to understand, because what we tend to think is that the things that are happening to us are creating our feelings. I think that because my dad died that I'm feeling grief, but here's how we know that's not true. I actually watched my dad die, but let's say that my dad died and I didn't know he had died yet. Let's say that I didn't find out that he had died until a week later. The fact is my dad would be dead, but I would have no feelings about it. I wouldn't feel bad at all about it because I have no thoughts about it. I'm not making it mean anything. I don't know about it yet. Do you see that? So when I find out my dad has died, now I have thoughts in my brain and those thoughts are creating the feelings in my body. Do you see this? Now our brains, we avoid feeling bad and we try to do everything we can to feel better even if it's destructive to us long term. That's just the way our brains are wired. So we are always chasing after good feelings.

Let's do a little exercise. I'm going to throw out some examples. Some of these things are going to be thoughts and some of them are going to be circumstances, and I want you to think about which one is which. "My boss doesn't like me." Thought or circumstance? That is a thought. "I have a teenage daughter." Thought or circumstance?

Circumstance. That can be proven if your daughter is between the ages of 13 and 19. "I weigh 167 pounds." That is a circumstance because you can get on the scale and you can see that... or actually, it would probably be better to say, "The scale says I weigh 167 pounds." "My life is overwhelming." That is a thought, not a circumstance. "My son has Tourette Syndrome." That is a circumstance if your son has been diagnosed with Tourette Syndrome. "My ex is stingy." That is a thought. We might be tempted to think it's a fact because of our thoughts about what your ex is doing, but it's actually a thought. "My ex didn't pay his child support last month." That is a circumstance, because you could prove that. "My son is mad at me." That is a thought.

Now let's talk about feelings, because thoughts create all of our feelings. And this is important to understand, because if our emotions are dependent on the behavior of other people or our circumstances, then we're going to have to control other people and try to change them so that we can feel better, and that never works. We have zero control over the behavior of other people. But we do have 100% control over our own thoughts and beliefs and therefore, over our own feelings and behaviors. And this is where all of our power lies. This is what I want to help women with, to discover what they do and do not have control over and help them take ownership of their own lives while letting go of trying to change somebody else. And this is what survivors try to do, right? We think that if we can change our husband or our pastor or our friend then we will feel good. And our emotions are all dependent on what these other people do and the change that they're making in their lives. It doesn't work that way. We can't control other people. If we want to be happy, if we want to live a fulfilling life, we have to begin with ourselves. We have to let them be who they are, and then we have to make decisions based on that reality of who this person is, not based on our wishful thinking about who they could or should be in our minds, okay?

So let's talk about feelings for a second. Feelings are simply vibrations in our body. That's all they are. They can't kill us or hurt us. The difference between vibrations in our body or feelings and emotions and sensations is this: a feeling or an emotion starts in the brain with a thought and that causes an emotion in our body. So we'll have a thought like, "If I get up in front of people, I might trip over my words or trip over my feet," and when we think that thought, we might feel our heart start to race, we might feel our hands start to shake, we might start sweating, we have all these physiological responses to this thought in our brain. Now, sensation starts in our body and goes to our brain. So if we step on a small rock or stub our toe on a rock, we experience pain, a sensation, in our toe, and then it sends a message through our nervous system to our brain and lets our brain know, "There's pain in my toe." So that's the difference between feelings and emotions that are in our body, which start in our brain and go to our body, and sensations which start in our body and go to our brain.

Now, empowering feelings are going to lead to effective actions. For example, if we are feeling confident, we are going to get things done, we're going to make decisions, we're going to be moving forward. Negative feelings can sometimes give us a heads up to stop or avoid something that is dangerous. That's the fight, flight, or freeze response. And sometimes, but not always, it could lead to ineffective actions. For example, if we are feeling shame in our body, then we may tend to shut down, hide, or run away. Feelings are why we take the actions that we take. Now, feelings are things like anger, sadness, contentment. If you do a Google search online you can find lists of the feeling words which are actually really helpful, because when you're running models on yourself, it's helpful to actually get really specific about the exact feeling that you're experiencing in your body. It just helps you to get some more awareness about what's going on.

So, I'll give you an example. If the circumstance is that it's raining outside, our thought might be... let's say we're getting married that day. Our thought might be, "The rain is going to ruin my wedding!" and we're going to feel disappointment in our body or maybe anger in our body or something like that. Or, our thought if we're a farmer and we're really excited about the rain and we need it, our thought might be, "Oh good, I really need this rain. The seeds are going to grow now. Maybe we'll have a bumper crop this year." And then we might feel anticipation or happiness or hopefulness in our body. But the rain itself as a circumstance is neutral. Our thoughts, what we're making that rain mean for us, is what's going to trigger the feelings in our bodies. Not the circumstance, not the rain. It's our thought about it. Do you see that? So it's what we make the circumstance mean for us that causes us to feel angry, sad, happy, anxious, or any other emotion that we feel.

Now, the next line in the model is the "A" line and that's "Actions." We take action based on our feelings, and actions can be either things that we do that you might see yourself doing externally like running or picking up your desk or taking a drink of water. Or it could be things that you're not doing, like not getting that assignment written or not making dinner. Or it could be things that other people could see you doing externally or that people couldn't see you doing but that you know that you're doing. Maybe you're looping in your mind or maybe you're laying in bed unable to sleep. Actions can also be your reactions to things. So, actions are basically the way that you're showing up in your life for yourself.

And the actions create all of the results, and the "R" line is the very last line in the model, and that's the results. So for example, if you feel shame in your body, you might take the action of defending yourself. If you feel fear in your body, you might take the action of procrastinating because maybe you're afraid that you're going to fail at something. If you feel guilt in your body, then you might take the action of saying "yes" when you

really want to say “no.” So our actions create our results, and that’s the “R” line in the model. Results will prove our original thought in the model, that “T” line, because our brain is always going to look for evidence and it’s going to create the evidence for what it already believes or what it’s already thinking. We will inevitably create the result in our life that confirms what we already believe. The “R” line in the model, too, it has to be the result for your life, not the result for anybody else. This is your model, so it’s going to be your result. And you are responsible for your results. We’re not responsible for the results of other people.

So I’m just going to give you some examples of how this model works. Let’s say that the circumstance is that your friend doesn’t text you back in 24 hours. And your thought is, “People don’t want to be with me.” And when you think that thought in your brain, the feeling in your body is sad. And when you feel sad in your body, you take action by hiding, crying, you don’t reach out to your friend again, and you complain to your kids. You’d write down all of the things that you do when you feel sad in your body because you’re thinking the thought, “People don’t want to be with me.” The result that you’re creating for yourself, then, is that you don’t like yourself, thereby proving to your brain that nobody wants to be with you, including you.

Now we’re going to take that same circumstance, your friend doesn’t text you back in 24 hours, and we’re going to apply a different thought to it. Let’s say that you could believe the thought “Well, my friend didn’t text me back, but I love to be with me and I will have my own back.” Now the feeling in your body that you get when you think that thought, if you truly believe that thought, is patience, maybe, for your friend. Because now you’ve got your own back. So when you feel patient in your body, you have tea, you curl up with a book, and you enjoy your time alone. And the result is, when you do those things, that you are treating yourself kindly, thereby proving to your brain that you deserve kindness and respect.

Let’s do one more. Let’s say that your ten-year-old son says “Mommy, you don’t care about me.” And your thought in your brain is, “I’m a failure as a mom,” and that thought creates the feeling of guilt in your body. And when you feel guilt in your body, you take the action of arguing and defending yourself, you lash out to your son, you might cry by yourself, you might hide. And the result in your life is that you fail yourself at that moment, thereby proving to your brain that you are a failure.

Now let’s take the same circumstance where the ten-year-old son says, “You don’t care about me, Mommy,” and your thought when he says that is, “I care about my son and myself so much.” And the feeling that thought creates in your body is love. And when you feel love in your body, you take the action of giving your son a hug, you listen to

him vent, you tell him you understand, and the relationship is back in order, right? The result for your life is that you love yourself and your son at that moment, thereby proving to your brain that you have a love that cares.

Do you see now what our biggest problem is? It's our thinking. It's our brain's programming. Everything that we have created for ourselves in our lives started as a thought in our brain, either a conscious thought or an unconscious thought. So it is critical to look at what those thoughts and beliefs are, and that is what the model tool does for us. This is the tool that I use when I coach Christian women every week in my programs. Every week in Flying Free or if you're in Flying Higher, which is for divorced Christian women, you get access to an hour of group coaching where I help two to three women with issues related to their marriages, parenting, relationships, emotional and spiritual abuse, all the things. Members get to attend live if they want to, or they can watch the replay videos on our membership site, or they can listen to the replays on our private podcast. Now, here are some of the things that these women have shared about how coaching with the model tool has helped them.

One woman says this: "If you're not watching these coaching sessions, you are missing out on a lifeline. These sessions bring up questions that we may not have had surface yet, but then we listen to the answers. You may get that 'aha!' moment. I had so many 'aha!' moments during tonight's coaching. I was crying and proud of these women. They are doing amazing work and all of them are such an encouragement. Flying Free is my support. I would not be where I am today without the resources found here."

Here's what another woman wrote in: "Thank you, Flying Free sisters, for being present with me last night. It was a breakthrough for me when Natalie said, 'Our underlying thoughts always have to do with our feelings of worth.' It was so humbling for me to realize my core belief is still that I am worthless. This is the message I received growing up, which was reinforced in twenty-nine years of an abusive marriage, and I believe it is true. That's the reality underneath all my thoughts. I think I am worthless. Thank you for giving me a safe place to see that truth. I believe that I now will be able to start healing on a deeper level."

Here's another one: "Group coaching calls have helped me because I get to hear Natalie's thought process and approach to tackling very specific yet very relatable issues. Reading articles, watching videos, and asking questions in the forum are helpful in their own way, but nothing compares to getting to see the thought processes and the material being used live. Watching coaching is amazing in itself, but if you can take it a step further and get coached yourself, it just amplifies the experience. Natalie takes the time to understand your situation, ask necessary questions, and really gets to know the

issues at hand, and then together, we come to a conclusion. I walked away from my coaching topic with clarity on how I could approach my concern and tools that were specific enough for that scenario but applicable in many other ways, and guess what? I took the tools we used and applied them, and I felt so strong and empowered to do it. I would 100% pay for that coaching. I can't believe it is included."

Another woman wrote, "The coaching is really working for me, and doing the work of rewiring my brain may seem like a lot of effort, but I find it's priceless in terms of my progress."

Another one writes, "Gosh, I just love the coaching videos. They help me so much even when the topics they're about seemingly have nothing to do with my situation. I learn so much."

What about you? Would you like to learn more about how to use this tool and listen to Christian women going through so many of the same things that you're going through discover new ways of thinking about life and your situation so that instead of feeling helpless and hopeless, you can start feeling empowered and hopeful about your future? I want to invite you to join us. It's only \$29 dollars a month, and that includes this weekly coaching plus a huge vault of five years worth of classes and workshops and testimony videos and Q&As. You're also going to get to connect with hundreds of Christian women in our private forum and in two online, live gatherings via Zoom every month. It is such a bargain, because we want as many women as possible to be able to access this training and these materials.

If you go to joinflyingfree.com, you can complete the application and begin that process today. If you are a divorced woman of faith, we have another program for you called Flying Higher and you can apply to be in that program by going to joinflyinghigher.com. So joinflyingfree.com is for women of faith who are married and joinflyinghigher.com is for women of faith who are already divorced. You're done, you're divorced. And by the way, the Flying Free program, there are hundreds of women in that program, most of them are still married. There are some women who are separated from their husbands, and there are other women who are in the process of getting divorced, but I want to make sure that people understand from the outset that I do not try to get people to get divorced or try to get people to not get divorced. We hold space for people to make their own choices about their life. All we do is give people the tools to think for themselves and strengthen them and empower them to see what their reality is, and then based on their understanding of their reality and what they want their future to look like, they make their own choice, and we support women in whatever choice they make for themselves, okay?

So I just want to make sure that everyone understands that that is my approach to this whole thing. I've gotten some flack, not just from women but from men and women, for not encouraging people to get divorced. And I think to myself, "I'm not going to tell people to get divorced." And then I've had other people criticize me for telling people that they should get divorced. And I've never said that they should get divorced, either. I just say, "You do you, and I'm here to love you and support you in whatever you decide, okay?" I just want you to know that this podcast is made possible through the Flying Free Program. Thank you so much for listening and until next time, fly free.